

Funerals as civic liturgies notes about a field of research¹

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RESUMO

Este artigo analisa o processo de constituição de funerais em liturgias cívicas, destacando sua relação com outros fenômenos históricos, como a conformação dos imaginários nacionais, o processo de individualização moderno e as mudanças nas formas de lidar com a morte. Assim, ele pretende conjugar elementos que permitam refletir sobre a conformação de um campo específico de pesquisas, cuja potencialidade permanece ainda pouco explorada. Chamando a atenção para os limites das análises centradas apenas nos usos políticos e intencionais do passado, ele ressalta a importância de considerar as dimensões utópica e imaginária presentes nos rituais e festas cívicas, sugerindo a relevância de tal reflexão para pensar o próprio desenvolvimento da prática historiográfica.

Palavras-chave: funerais; rituais cívicos; nacionalismo.

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the process of constitution of funerals in civic liturgies, emphasizing their relationship with other historical phenomena, as the conformation of the national imaginary, the modern individualization process, and the changes in the ways death is dealt with. So, it intends to conjugate elements about the configuration of a specific field of research, which is not really developed. Criticizing the analyses centered exclusively on the political and intentional uses of the past, it emphasizes the importance of considering the utopian and imaginary dimensions of the rituals and civic parties, and suggests the relevance of this reflection to think about the development of historiography.

Keywords: funerals; civic rituals; nationalism.

Promoting ostentatious funerals, praising the dead person with rituals that set him/her apart from others, dramatizing in a funeral ceremony the hierarchies that traverse the social body: these are perceptible experiences in many societies throughout human history. On the other hand, transforming such events in moments of celebration of a nation and worshipping the

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memory of an individual for the sake of his/her actions in favor of that collectivity, with all the peculiarities that the belief in the effective existence of the latter represents, constitutes part of an experience that should be understood as a subproduct of a historicity of its own, whose contours can be determined in a relatively precise way. For such phenomena, which today we tend to naturalize, have been formed within a very complex set of historical variables and changes, contained in specific processes of short and long term. Thus, it is possible to stress some of the elements that were on the basis of their construction, even if in an introductory way. This is one of the main goals of this article, which intends to contribute for the understanding of a still scarcely studied phenomenon within historiography.

By doing so, moreover, we will also point out the possibility of thinking of studies of civic funerals as an effective field of research, marked by a number of related issues and also by the fact of expanding itself beyond what could be considered in an initial approach. Involving not only the analysis of disputes over national memory, such objects can point additionally to forms of ritualization and representation of power, changes in the ways of experiencing temporality, and relationships between civic practices and the writing of history. Furthermore, their approach can call attention to certain limits of historiographical research, especially when it does not consider the collective longings which tend to play a role in such phenomena. Restricting themselves usually to the study of intentional and political usages of the past, historians have neglected the utopic and imaginary dimension present in rituals and civic parties, and it is now important to inquire about the risks involved in this loss. The reason for this inquiry, it is worth stressing, is that this dimension can serve to help reflect about the development of historiography in a more general way, which has been many times infused with too much suspicion regarding everything that is not understood as “rational” in the political world.

We will center our analysis on three processes which have marked the last centuries and which we consider particularly relevant to the understanding of the constitution of funerals as civic liturgies. Each of them will correspond to a specific topic: in the first, we will tackle the importance attained by biographical memory and its relation with the changes in the ways of dealing with death; in the second, we will stress elements that allow us to understand the national imaginary and their implications when it comes to think about civic practices and rituals in the 19th and 20th centuries; finally, in the third topic, we will analyze briefly the new ways of dealing with temporality which have accompanied the process of constitution of the feeling of belonging to the

national collectivity (crucial aspect for the understanding of the specificity of the civic liturgies inaugurated then, according to what had been discussed in the previous topic). In parallel, we can map out some of the main theoretical conceptions which have aimed at establishing landmarks for the understanding of nationalism. The field of discussion being extremely wide, our analysis does not have any claim to comprehensiveness, serving only to underline certain points considered relevant to the study of funerals as civic practices.

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMORY AND DEATH AS MOMENTS OF MEMORY

The study of funerals as civic liturgies cannot fail to consider the broad and complex picture of historical changes in effect since the end of the 18th century, which allowed the configuration of rituals based on national celebrations in the following centuries. In this sense it is important to understand, at first, that the funeral rituals in honor of national heroes, so dear to the commemoration spree of the 19th and 20th centuries, had their bases on the complex process of modern individualization.² A rather broad theme due to its various aspects, the process of “transition” from a holistic conception of the world to one centered on the role of the individual is renowned for being a problem dear to the Social Sciences, having been addressed by a great number of authors (and occupying an important place in the research of classic scholars such as Max Weber).³ Often resumed in the second half of the 20th century, this concern was also a prominent one with intellectuals as Norbert Elias well before the 1940s, configuring the center of his reflections on the relationship between the individual and society.

So, in a text of the late 1930s, Elias was already concerned about the problem, pointing out the historicity of individual perception as something external to society and noticing that it could be studied based on its innate psychological properties as a phenomenon peculiar to a certain moment of the “civilizing process” (and, therefore, to psychic tensions that act on all subjects living in the same period of historical development).⁴ In this sense, his criticism of the false dichotomy between the individual and society relied on the conception that the latter was really a historical construction: it was only from the moment that the individual became a fundamental value in society that the belief that it is possible to understand human subjects isolatedly, without considering the tense network of mobile relations in which they are inserted, could have been configured. In the following decades, the problem of the process of modern individualization has gained more and more space, being

the concern of authors whose theoretical perspective pointed to “diagnoses” practically opposed to the one formulated by Norbert Elias. This is the case of Richard Sennett, for example, who stressed how the belief in the existence of personality and the singularity of the individual was something that was only consolidated with the bourgeois culture of the 19th century.⁵ These, however, are only two examples among many others, taking into consideration the importance of the theme and the several works that sought to approach it in the field of the Social Sciences.⁶

What is important to stress here, therefore, is how the configuration of a world view relying on the individual was fundamental to the constitution of a belief in the unicity of a certain trajectory. It was responsible for founding, in a certain measure, the great surge of biographies of the 19th century and the constitution of a form of writing history which praised the actions of certain characters, seen as key figures in the development process of national histories. Thus, such changes are closely associated to the role taken by memory from modernity on, more and more thought of as being a subjective phenomenon, it being important to reflect in what measure its relationship with the unicity of the *I*, marked by the chronological chain of individual life, was a historical conquest, which made much less sense among the ancient Greeks, for example.⁷

The process in which memory would become more and more related to one subject, on the other hand, has already been understood as a counterpart to an attenuation of the national feeling. This is, for instance, the perspective of Pierre Nora, who established a direct relationship between the loss of that which he pointed out as the last tradition of lived memory in a spontaneous way (the national memory) and the process of “psychologizing” memory, more and more grown to be an individual phenomenon and duty.⁸ No doubt the process of modern individualization has as its corollary the conformation of memory as a subjective phenomenon (Pierre Nora’s “memory-men”), which singles out a personality and, therefore, is related to the changes in which the basic value of cultural reference ceases to be the great holistic unities of old to fit in the narrowness of a trajectory, making the issue of individual memory something much more recent than it is generally believed; something proper to modern-contemporary societies (Velho, 2003, especialmente capítulo XI). Nevertheless, the process that transforms the individual in the most significant value culturally, certainly in tune with the central role that the cult of “great men” would gain from the French Revolution on, is intimately related to the glorification of the nation as a more widely encompassing entity.⁹ This, in fact,

is the perspective of Louis Dumont, important scholar of the “modern ideology”, starting from its core, individualism:

Actually, in the most precise, modern sense of the term, the nation and nationalism – distinguished from simple patriotism – have historically been linked to individualism as a value. Not only does the nation accompany nationalism historically, but the interdependence of them imposes itself, so that it can be said that the nation is the global society composed of people who consider themselves individuals.¹⁰

Pointing out the close relationship between individualism and nationalism, Dumont would also acknowledge the extension of the problem, indicating the need of a deep study of various national experiences (the different essays that compose the book follow this path, at the same time that they intend to conjugate elements for a global view of modern ideology).¹¹ More importantly, on the other hand, is to think how the process of modern individualization relates with the changes in the ways of celebrating the dead, which also characterize the period. Actually, the theme of the attitudes regarding death has only become dearer to the Social Sciences from the 1950s on, becoming later on the object of well-known studies of historians like Michel Vovelle and Philippe Ariès.¹² Some ideas of the latter author can even help perceive the complex picture of changes that were on the basis of the constitution of funerals as civic liturgies. His perception that the relationship between death and biography was something that had already established itself in the 15th century, for example, goes in the same direction: “it is believed, from then on, that each man sees his whole life again at the moment he dies, at once. It is also believed that his attitude at this moment will give his biography its definitive sense, its conclusion” (Ariès, 2003, p.53).

According to the same author, however, only from the late 18th century on would we have had a more significant change in the ways of dealing with death, when practices inexistent until then, such as the cult of relics and visits to cemeteries, practically constituted a new form of religion. Thus, his perspective points out in fact to the recent character of these practices regarded as immemorial: they do not confuse themselves with the concerns that characterized certain ancient societies in relation to the dead, for all the wealth of ancient funeral epigraphy was based on the intention of driving them away from the world of the living (in a way very different from the one of the romantic cult of the dead in the 19th century).¹³ Similarly, between the intense

use of obelisks, stars, and other kinds of monuments for the celebration of the dead in antiquity and their cult from the 18th century on, we would have had a period in which they had been confided to Church, a usual practice in the Middle Ages, which was founded on the belief that there they would receive the protection of the saints. Therefore, it would have been only from the late 18th century on that certain commemorative practices were established, founded even on a strengthening of family feeling, which made the place of burial become more and more a private place, used for visits and tributes of family members.¹⁴ Thus, the modern cult of the dead, associated to the process that related death to the constitution of a biography, was a fundamental aspect for the establishment of funerals as civic liturgies in the way we know them today: “The cult of the dead is today one of the forms or one of the expressions of patriotism. Similarly, the anniversary of the Great War, its victorious conclusion, is considered in France the feast day of dead soldiers” (Ariès, 2003, p.77).¹⁵

FORMATION OF NATIONAL IMAGINARY: DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

The processes of formation of modern individualism and changes in the ways of commemorating the dead were accompanied by another crucial element for the establishment of civic liturgies: the configuration of the feeling of belonging to a national collectivity, fruit of the transformations that marked especially the 18th and 19th centuries. The theme has already been the object of study of a number of works, and it is important to stress only certain authors who have had strong influence on the historiographical field. In this case, therefore, we shall stress only some ways of understanding the constitution or perpetuation of national traditions and of all the ritual forms that have followed them, without any pretension to comprehensiveness. Their analysis may allow a broader view of the theoretical field in which the studies about rituals and civic liturgies are inserted.

One of the main forms of understanding the phenomenon points to intentional actions of historical subjects in the constitution of traditions traversed by the feeling of belonging to a national collectivity. In this sense, the focus of many authors has fallen upon the political uses of the past, particularly concerning the institutionalized sectors or the ones closer to power mechanisms whose interests in concealing the recent roots of tradition, which they would like to be seen as immemorial, seem more obvious. Among the works that address this issue, one of them which certainly has had considerable

influence on historiography was the collection of essays *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. After this publication, several others have appeared, using the notion of “invention” and conceiving an actual “invention of invention” in the words of Peter Burke (who also pointed out the fact that that was not the first use of the term).¹⁶ In spite of the differences that characterized the approach of the authors whose texts make up the book, the way Eric Hobsbawm sought to address the issue has become the main reference for historians who have employed the concept of “invented traditions”.¹⁷

When trying to understand the supposedly mass production of national traditions between the years 1870 and 1914, Hobsbawm elaborated an analysis that emphasized the intentionality of historical subjects and the extensively malleable character of traditions, as the notion of “invention” itself suggests. So, in his interpretation, the mobilization of traditions of the French Revolution during the Third Republic appears as the fruit of the consciousness of bourgeois sectors that, in view of the expansion of democracy and liberal regimes, had perceived the importance of employing irrational elements of the political field. The interests of the “men of the center” (the bourgeoisie) in masking their class condition furnish the explanatory keys to the phenomenon, taking into consideration that political legitimization, in the age of mass politics that was already beginning, could no more be obtained by mechanisms of belief such as the divine right of kings (Hobsbawm, 1997, p.271 ss.). Hobsbawm’s analysis, in this way, relied heavily on the rationality of historical subjects to explain the constitution of national traditions, as well as on the emphasis on the masquerade of reality underlying the notion of “invention”, which seemed to transform those who mobilized such symbolic arsenal into wholly conscious subjects who did not share in the belief of that which they had helped to form. On the other hand, the single focus on the political dimension of the uses of the past left behind the cultural mechanisms which allow us to understand the constitution of a national imaginary, conceiving the field of memory and traditions as something which can be manipulated, without any constraints as regards the functioning of the symbolic world.

Although in a different theoretical perspective, the conception of Pierre Nora about “places of memory” presents some similarities with that which characterizes the notion of “invention of traditions”, relying on the intention of memory as something crucial to the understanding of the “places” where the French national memory crystallized (Nora, 1993). The issue has already been stressed by other authors who counterposed the problem of the political

uses of memory to that of the homogenization mechanisms of shared representations of the past, which go beyond the dimension of the social actors' intentionality. It is in this sense, for instance, that Marie-Claire Lavabre sought to stress the feeblenesses of researches trapped in the study of the "weight" or the "choice" of the past, ruling out both the approaches centered only on the way collective memory is spontaneously transmitted and those founded on institutionalized forms of dealing with memory. Thus, the author not only distances herself from Pierre Nora's approach, centered on what she called "historical memory", but seeks to resume Maurice Halbwachs' notion of "collective memory", which seems to have remained equally trapped in the processes of constitution of recollections and conformation of collective identities, which occur without the uses and manipulations of memory.¹⁸

A perspective that interests us more, because it is centered on the problem of nationalism and can be approximated to that of Marie-Claire Lavabre (due to its focus on cultural elements and conditionings which do not depend only on the will of historical subjects), is that of Benedict Anderson.¹⁹ Offering a more complex explanation for the conformation of "imagined communities" (therefore, believed in, and not only invented), Anderson sought to think about the emergence of nationalism as part of a long process that conjugated elements which point to profound mentality changes, such as the crisis of Christendom and of divine monarchies, together with other more conjunctural "fatalities" related to capitalism, such as the expansion of the editorial market. On the one hand, therefore, the dynasty crisis, seen as imagined communities (and not only as the end of the divine right of kings), would provide a crucial element for the constitution of the feeling of belonging to a national collectivity. On the other, if the crisis of the religious unity had already brought about some loss of importance of the Latin language, so would the establishment of the editorial capitalism be on the basis of the consolidation of vernaculars, grounding the production of national imaginaries (for the linguistic unity would be an essential presupposition of the conformation of national consciousnesses).

It is not necessary to recall in detail all the complex explanation elaborated by Benedict Anderson about the emergence of nationalism, since it is more important to focus on some elements that justify the idea of thinking about nations as imagined communities. So, it is relevant to notice his effort to understand it as a cultural system, closer to religiosity, for example, than the rationalist political ideologies that abounded in the Enlightenment. Unlike the "impatient silence" with which Marxism and Liberalism would deal with death and other human life contingencies, nationalism would assure a sense of

continuity and a promise of eternity, better responding to certain existential longings and to human suffering: for, if the nation is eternal, so are its heroes. This would be, for instance, the symbolic meaning of cenotaphs and unknown soldiers tombs, which would confront human decay with the feeling of existence of a collectivity which believes itself eternal and guarantees the eternity of its “more illustrious children” (immortalized in national memory). Emerging at a moment of crisis of other systems of belief (such as Christendom and the divine monarchies, although not simply to replace them), the national consciousness should be understood, therefore, considering its cultural roots, and should be explained more by the aspects that allowed it to be effectively believed in than by the Machiavellian intention of certain historical subjects to conceal reality.

In this sense, Anderson’s explanation seemed to regard the need of supplying the deficiencies of those which approximated nationalism of the notion of ideology, namely in the case of Marxism, whose feebleness in dealing with the theme was pointed out not only by authors who had been formed by and later moved away from that intellectual tradition, but also by those who have sought to elaborate reformulations still within it (as Benedict Anderson himself or Cornelius Castoriadis, in the first case, and Fredric Jameson, in the second). As a matter of fact, like Anderson, Castoriadis also constructed a very critical perspective concerning that tradition, which marked his trajectory, including criticism of its feebleness in dealing with nationalism. The tendency to approximate it of mere mystification (and, therefore, of something unreal, such as “bourgeois ideology”) was acidly ironized by the author, who defended the thesis that imaginary phenomena are no less real than those that constitute the material forces of society:

This imaginary of nation, however, reveals itself to be more solid than all realities, as the two world wars and the survival of nationalism have shown. The present-day “Marxists” who believe they can eliminate everything by simply saying: “nationalism is a mystification”, are obviously prey to self-mystification ... Saying – “the evidence that nationalism was simply mystification, *consequently something unreal*, and that it will dissolve on the day of the world revolution”, is not only boasting victory ahead of time, it is saying: “You, men who lived from 1900 to 1965 and who knows till what later date still, and you the millions of dead people of the two wars, and all the others who have suffered with that and are sympathetic – all of you, you *un-exist*, you have always *un-existed* in the eyes of true history; all you have lived through was hallucinations,

poor shadows of dreams, it was not history. True history was this virtual invisible that *will be* and that has, treacherously, prepared the end of your illusions”. (author’s italics)²⁰

Also Fredric Jameson stressed that nationalism has always been a problematic object within that theoretical tradition, condescending thus with the criticism formulated by Marshall Sahlins regarding the “self-imposed limitation” of Marxist thought, which has always faced culture from an instrumental perspective.²¹ Looking for an alternative inside Marxism itself, Jameson stressed the need to take into consideration as well what he called the utopian dimension of the cultural artifact. Thus he intended to situate himself against the Durkheimian tendency of understanding religion only as a means of integration in collective values, without, however, forgetting the utopian role of the present in the Nazi ideology, for example. At the same time his ideas, by not cancelling out the “instrumentalist” dimension of culture, showed certain ambiguity in relation to Sahlins’ criticism (about how Marxism has always tended to understand culture in a functional way), they pointed to the possibility of an analysis that would take into consideration the more “spontaneous” character of gestation of certain cultural constructs, without disregarding the political uses the symbolic world might be subject to.²² Although Jameson’s fundamental concern was with the field of literary criticism, he also stressed functionality to think about nationalism, which, as he acknowledged, continued being the great theoretical impasse of Marxism, precisely because it could not account for its utopian dimension and take the “national question” as “a mere ideological epiphenomenon”.

No doubt this is only a dimension of the long debate about nationalism, an insight into which would demand the analysis of several other theoretical perspectives and would exceed the limits of this article. The important thing to stress is that considering the cultural roots of phenomena such as nationalism (placing it closer to religiosity, and not only to a rationalist ideology as, for instance, Anderson does) does not exclude the fact that national traditions are also objects of political disputes and uses in the field of symbolic struggles. Such option, at the same time it allows us to pay attention to the complexity of the phenomenon, making it possible to have a better understanding of the foundations of the belief in the existence of a imagined community, not necessarily sets aside the social interests and uses of the available symbolic goods, leaving ample room for the perception of conflicts proper to the political arena. As corollary, the dominant sectors do not appear

only as mere mystifiers, who do not believe in the symbolic arsenal they mobilize, and the constitution of the national imaginary is not confined to a mere invention completely detached from reality.

As has already been remarked oftentimes, the perspectives that keep on confining the sphere of imaginary phenomena to a status of unreality or of subproduct of material forces seem very fragile today, for this aspect of the matter has already been discussed by a great number of authors.²³ Against a conception that perceives nationalism as only the fruit of ideological instrumentalization, it is important to stress that the aspects related to the imaginary and the representations are part of the social reality, and the field of imagination cannot be seen as restricted to mechanisms of falsification of reality. Something very similar in this sense can be observed in the more recent discussions about the conformations of collective memory around an event or individual: the efficacy itself of the imaginary or mnemonic construction about certain historical figure will be the more natural the more it relies on aspects of reality, not having, therefore, only an illusionary sense of masquerading reality in phenomena like myths, representations, or memories constituted in the field of symbolic struggles.²⁴ At the origin of discussions like these, it is worth noticing, there is probably the inflection generated by criticism of less elaborate uses of concepts such as “invention” and “ideology”, which could hardly have been seen as the only explanatory vectors of reality.²⁵

THE CIVIC LITURGIES AND THE WAYS OF LEADING WITH TIME

The study of funerals as civic liturgies also points to other problems not usually taken into consideration by historians, including those related to the need of a more properly anthropological approach of the theme, which considers, for example, its relationship with new ways of experiencing time. Here, it is also worth emphasizing that narrowing this study only to intentional and political uses of the past has contributed little to it, and it is important to reflect about some possible meeting points of perspectives of authors who have sought to go beyond such limitations. Ultimately, such analyses seem to indicate the potentialities of a field still scarcely explored, which can include crucial problems even for epistemological reflection about historical knowledge. To delimitate the issue, on the other hand, we can start by resorting again to Benedict Anderson's theses, since his analysis of the formation of national consciousnesses points to a dimension seldom perceived: the ways of dealing with temporality, which had been on the basis of the consolidation of

the belief in the existence of a collectivity that develops itself in the linear time of calendars.

By relating the constitution of national imaginaries to the expansion of editorial capitalism, Anderson tried to call attention to the way the diffusion of novels and newspapers represented changes in the forms of experiencing temporality, which were also on the basis of the consolidation of national imaginaries. In this sense, his dialogue with Walter Benjamin is very strong, not only due to the latter's criticism of the linear and teleological conception of history present in historicism and in "progressist history" (phrase used to designate the conception of the German social democracy of that time), but due to the fact that such perspectives are understood within the deeper changes in temporal sensitivity, which followed the loss of "experience" brought about by the process of formation of capitalism.²⁶ In the same way that, to Benjamin, the novel and the newspaper (in the sense of journalistic information) are considered fundamental signs of subjective changes that would put an end to the narrative ability of transmitting "experience", to Anderson, both are also on the basis of the constitution of the belief in a collectivity that moves in an "empty and homogeneous" temporality, where past and future do not find themselves fused into a certain present any more (as in the temporality that founded the epic narrative, for example).²⁷ The novel, in this sense, would point to the representation of a collectivity in which the actions of various characters happen in a "transversal" conception of "simultaneity", marked by "temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar" (and not in the "medieval conception" of "simultaneity-along-time") (Anderson, 2008, p.54).²⁸ That is, it seems clear here the influence of Benjamin's criticism of the philosophies of history, as well as his perception that the consolidation of the novel (as a typically bourgeois genre, related to the search of meaning in view of the social disaggregation promoted by capitalism) would be linked to the emergence of a new temporal sensitivity, aspects which would found his search for the formulation of another conception of time inside materialism (different from that of the German social democracy). It is important to stress, in this sense, the perception of the relationship between the constitution of a national imaginary and the ways of dealing with temporality, a relevant aspect to think about the possible relation of Anderson's concerns with the ones of other authors who have devoted studies to the sphere of rituals and civic ceremonies.

It does not seem far-fetched, in this sense, to relate his perspective to that of Fernando Catroga, a historian who has turned himself more intensively to the study of ways of ritualizing time, including the ones associated with

funerals as civic liturgies. Moreover, the emphasis in the way nationalism is close to religiosity allows us to think about the notion of “civil religion” itself, which, although it had not been created by Catroga, has stood out in his analyses of the different processes of secularization and laicization of societies as the French and the North American.²⁹ Thus, manifesting itself not by means of a theology, but especially by rites and symbols, the civil religion would be the cement of the nation, as in the North American case:

Concretely, it objectifies itself in speeches, monument inscriptions, philatelic and numismatic productions, in frequent religious quotes (taken out from their contexts and used in the most varied public sessions), in the cult of civic heroes and the paradigmatic use of their lives, in the sacrificial cult of the Father Land (consubstantiated in the veneration of war veterans), in the use of public places and buildings as places of prayer, in the qualitative management of the calendar, etc. In other words: it is translated into symbols (such as anthems and flags), into rites (such as solemn sessions, inauguration speeches, parades), into multiple iconographic expressions, into heavy commemorative investments, as well as into an intense civic cult of the people killed in wars and the frequent sacralization of political-ideological language, particularly when the sense of the historical destiny of America is qualified. (Catroga, 2006, p.170-171)

Working “as a complement or substitute of traditional religions”, civic religiosity, in this sense, would be expressed in different forms of ritualization of history, among which are the great national funerals, a commemorative modality privileged in the 19th century as “glorification rite”. In Catroga’s perspective, therefore, the ritual of interment, as well as the other modes of manifestation of civic religiosity mentioned, would represent a form found by men to dissimulate the corruption of time, trying to make the collective memory work as a “second beyond”. In his existential protest against death and forgetfulness, man would need forms of ritualizing time, among which are rites of recollection like civic liturgies and historiographical practice as well, especially as it manifested itself in the 1800s: “thus, more than in any other necromantic ceremony, the civic commemorations appealed explicitly to the mediation of memory, calling it to perform the same pedagogical function as the one attributed to the whole historical literature” (Catroga, 1998, p.224). Stressing the ritual aspect of the historian’s work, Catroga sought to emphasize the consonance between the commemorative practices and the historiography of the 19th century, not placing history and memory in opposite epistemological

fields, but relating the study of civic liturgies like national funerals to the ways of perceiving time and ritualizing history (see also Catroga, 2001).

In a similar sense, it is interesting to consider Mona Ozouf's reflections about the civic feasts that involved the French Revolution.³⁰ Her perspective turned itself precisely against the predominance of political interpretations of revolutionary feasts which, centered only on the intentionality of the ceremonial planners, set aside the collective needs which surpass the more obvious dimension of the attempts at political uses of the past. Different from the conceptions focused on the manipulations of memory that we have already discussed (either in what concerns inventions of traditions or institutional mechanisms of construction of a national memory), Ozouf's conception called attention to the need of an anthropological approach of the feasts, which should not be "abandoned to history, which purges them entirely" (Ozouf, 1976, p.220). Thus, to think about the relationship between feasts and history is not to seek only to understand the attempts by the organizers of feasts at controlling the latter, but also to inquire about the way civic feasts can be related to the collective needs of breaking with the passage of time, pointing to an unconscious struggle against historical change.

Instead of a control of history, the ritual repetition of revolutionary feasts could translate a flight from history, as well as the projections of future that surpass the civic ceremonial could point less to an anticipation of reality than to a wish, something related to the imaginary level. So, the experience of the feast should be thought of in regard to the existential needs and anxieties that make its present be stretched into eternity and, thus, experienced in its dissimulated rupture with everyday life:

How then avoid seeing that the repetition serves to corrode the disturbing shock, to erase the threatening novelties of the event, to give it, tearing it from profane time, all the prestige of recommencement? ... Far from explaining the opposition between feast and history, the special case of the French Revolution tends to increase it; the feast is a temporary world that denies its temporariness; and, as the fruits of the feast must themselves be a feast, does not one glide, in a flight from history, into the utopia of an eternal feast? (Ozouf, 1976, p.225)

In Ozouf's perspective, therefore, it was due to historians not to get trapped into a final analysis of civic feasts, prey to the meanings intended by their organizers, whose intentions have been overestimated and scarcely problematized. The abundance of documents that display their political

projects does not justify privileging only “the meaning that was intended over the meaning of what was experienced”, as the majority of analysts has done (Ozouf, 1976, p.223-224). Similarly, her conception also helps problematize the notion of civic religiosity that we have already stressed. If the civic religions use elements of liturgies that characterize traditional religions, they cannot be understood only as part of an intentional project of substituting a new cult for a Catholic cult. That is, they cannot be understood only as regards the emphasis on the intention of historical subjects, either: “the will to substitute is not born completely ready in the brains of political men, but in the spectacle or recollection of an already incarnate substitution, though unconscious of itself” (Ozouf, 1976, p.222). It is in this same sense also that the author stressed the naiveté of getting attached only to the frequent repetitions of rituals, for “it suffices to have gone over some feast records to know what to retain: the pyramid, the simulacrum of a public room, the eternizing inscription are common acts and places of the revolutionary ceremonial” (Ozouf, 1976, p.221). Beyond these aspects, it is crucial to consider the collective needs that would characterize such commemorations, their relationship with the anxieties about and the attempts at controlling history, hardly understandable in an analysis focused only on the dimension of the political uses of the past.

Certainly, the perspective that Ozouf used to reflect about civic feasts ended up introducing important elements of analysis, generally disregarded by the majority of historians who have treated the theme. In fact, going beyond the issue of the feasts of the French Revolution, her ideas can be considered relevant to the understanding of civic rituals and ceremonies in a more general way, since they have many times been studied only with regard to their dimension of manipulation and intentional uses of memory. Like Fernando Catroga’s, therefore, her analysis points to the amplexness and the still embryonic character of researches in this field of studies, indicating the need of more theoretical and heuristic investments in the great variety of issues that compose it. Besides the theme of nationalism, already complex in itself, it points to other issues that demand greatly refined theoretical discussions, such as the changes in the ways of experiencing time, the collective longings that traverse civic rituals and practices, or even the relationship between them and the forms the writing of history has assumed. From this point of view, the studies of funerals and civic rituals can be considered not only something that constitutes an effective field of investigations (permeated by a set of conceptual problems and discussions which endow it with certain autonomy), but as a

field that allows us to reconsider continually the historiographical practice itself, and that possesses great potential for development.

NOTES

¹ This paper presents some reflections developed in my doctorate research, which has been carried out since March 2007, at the the MA/PhD Program in Social History of the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). The research analyzes the funerals of Brazilian Presidents post-1930, and it is supported by a grant from Faperj.

² We have used the concept in Gilberto Velho's sense, for whom individualization corresponds to the process through which the individual becomes the basic value of culture (as opposed to individuation, as something that exists in any society). See VELHO, Gilberto. *Projeto e metamorfose: antropologia das sociedades complexas*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2003, p.99.

³ See, among others, WEBER, Max. *A ética protestante e o espírito do capitalismo*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2004. The theme is also part of the concerns of Marcel Mauss, who stressed how the perception of the *I* has been diverse along human history. On this subject, see LEVI, Giovanni. Usos da biografia. In: FERREIRA, Marieta de Moraes; AMADO, Janaína. *Usos & abusos da história oral*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora FGV, 2002, p.170.

⁴ ELIAS, Norbert. *A sociedade dos indivíduos*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 1994. Although the work was published later and has texts of several periods, the first chapter reproduces the author's ideas as they had appeared in 1939.

⁵ Such changes, to Sennett, would be on the basis of the deconstruction of the public space as it would be verified in Western societies in the 19th and 20th centuries, an aspect which strongly gainsays Norbert Elias' diagnosis about the increase of the repression of the natural instincts of man, which would have been the foundation of the civilizing process. See SENNETT, Richard. *O declínio do homem público: as tiranias da intimidade*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1988. The contradiction between the perspectives of Elias and Sennett was pointed out by Renato Janine Ribeiro in his introduction to ELIAS, Norbert. *O processo civilizador: uma história dos costumes*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 1994.

⁶ See, for example, the studies of Lionel Trilling about the constitution of the values of sincerity and authenticity in the 18th and 19th centuries and the already quoted works by Gilberto Velho about the process of individualization that marked modernity. TRILLING, Lionel. *Sincerity and authenticity*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1972. VELHO, Gilberto. *Individualismo e cultura: notas para uma antropologia da sociedade contemporânea*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2008.

⁷ Jean-Pierre Vernant showed how, to the Greeks, memory did not have the function of elaborating an individual history which would assert the unicity of the *I*, for it was related to the running of time and the union with the deity. VERNANT, Jean-Pierre. *Mito e pensamento entre os gregos*. Estudos de psicologia histórica. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1990, p.160 ss. Such idea, although it is important because it underlines the relationship between

memory and the process of individualization, might have to be refined due to the fact that such way of resorting to the past, according to Fernando Catroga, is constitutive of memory itself. Check, in this case, CATROGA, Fernando. *Memória, história e historiografia*. Coimbra: Quarteto, 2001.

⁸ NORA, Pierre. Entre a memória e a história: a problemática dos lugares. *Projeto História 10. Revista do Programa de Pós-graduação em História e do Departamento de História da PUC/SP*. São Paulo: PUC/SP, n. 10, p.7-28, dez. 1993. For criticism of Pierre Nora's perspective for being excessively centered on French reality, see HARTOG, François. Tempo e história: "como escrever a história da França hoje?" *História Social. Revista do Programa de Pós-graduação em História da Unicamp*. Campinas: Unicamp, n.3, p.151, 1996.

⁹ About the importance given to "great men" from the French Revolution on, see CATROGA, Fernando. Ritualizações da história. In: ____; TORRAL, Luís Reis; MENDES, José Amado. *História da história em Portugal (séculos XIX-XX)*: da historiografia à memória histórica. Lisboa: Temas & Debates, 1998, p.221-361.

¹⁰ DUMONT, Louis. *O individualismo: uma perspectiva antropológica da ideologia moderna*. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1993, p.21.

¹¹ Gilberto Velho, in no doubt a much more comprehensive way, sought to underline the tension "individual/collectivity" as something proper to Western culture, identifying already in the Homeric poems a representation of heroism similar to the one found to be more typical of modern novels. Such observation, however, does not imply disregarding the specificities of the modern process of individualization, central point of his anthropological researches. VELHO, Gilberto, 2003, p.114 ss.

¹² The concern with the theme from the 1950s on was stressed by Philippe Ariès himself. See, ARIÈS, Philippe. *História da morte no Ocidente*. Rio de Janeiro: Ediouro, 2003. Among Michel Vovelle's studies, see VOVELLE, Michel. *Mourir autrefois: attitudes collectives devant la mort au 17^{ème} et 18^{ème} siècle*. Paris: Gallimard/Julliard, 1974. _____. *Piété baroque et déchristianisation*. Le Seuil: Paris, 1978. _____. *As almas do purgatório ou o trabalho de luto*. São Paulo: UNESP, 2010.

¹³ About funeral epigraphy in antiquity, see LE GOFF, Jacques. Memória. In: *História e memória*. Campinas: Ed. Unicamp, 1994, p.419-476. About the romantic cult of the dead in the Portuguese 19th century, see CATROGA, Fernando. *O céu da memória. Cemitério romântico e culto cívico dos mortos em Portugal (1756-1911)*. Coimbra: Minerva, 1999.

¹⁴ About the construction of family feeling, see also ARIÈS, Philippe. *História social da criança e da família*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 1978.

¹⁵ It is worth noticing the importance of certain events for the understanding of the cult of the dead as civic liturgies, whether it is the French Revolution (whose relevance would have been overstretched in this sense, according to Ariès), or even the building of unknown soldier tombs after World War I. About the theme, check OLICK, Jeffrey K.; ROBBINS, Joyce. Social memory studies: from "collective memory" to the historical sociology of mnemonic practices. *Annual Review of Sociology*, v.24, p.105-140, 1998.

¹⁶ BURKE, Peter. Bricolagem de tradições. *Folha de S. Paulo*. São Paulo, 1/03/2001. Caderno Mais!

¹⁷ The following discussion is based on the two texts of the book by Eric Hobsbawm, the one of the introduction and the closing text. It is important to notice, however, that the notion of “invention” can be used in diverse senses, even when it appears in texts that dialogue with Eric Hobsbawm’s proposal. The analysis carried out here, therefore, would never have the pretense of being comprehensive of all the texts that have used the notion. See HOBBSAWM, Eric; RANGER, Terence. *A Invenção das tradições*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1997. By the first author, check also *Nações e nacionalismo desde 1780*. Programa, mito e realidade. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 2002.

¹⁸ LAVABRE, Marie-Claire. De la notion de mémoire à la production des mémoires collectives. In: CEFAÏ, Daniel (Dir.). *Cultures politiques*. Paris: PUF, 2001, p.233-252. It is worth mentioning that the problem pointed out cannot be extended to the great majority of articles that make up the monumental collection edited by Pierre Nora (the work *Les lieux de mémoire*, published in seven volumes along the 1980s and 1990s). Besides that, it must be understood only within the limits of the approach proposed by the author of the opening text of the collection (even because this same text deals with issues that go far beyond the said issue, formulating actually a real epistemological diagnosis of the changes that have marked the field of history and memory in the last decades).

¹⁹ ANDERSON, Benedict. *Comunidades imaginadas: reflexões sobre a origem e a difusão do nacionalismo*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2008.

²⁰ CASTORIADIS, Cornelius. *A instituição imaginária da sociedade*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1982, p.179.

²¹ JAMESON, Fredric. *O inconsciente político*. A narrativa como ato socialmente simbólico. São Paulo: Ática, 1992. Marshall Sahlins discusses in detail the way Marxist theory tended to deal with the cultural phenomenon in SAHLINS, Marshall. *Cultura e razão prática*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2003.

²² It is worth pointing out that this is an approach to the problem that is similar to that of several other authors who have tried to get away from the theoretical impasses of Marxism without completely disregarding its contributions to the understanding of the functioning of the symbolic world. In this sense, the issue clearly goes beyond the problem of nationalism. For an example, among several others, see BOURDIEU, Pierre. *O poder simbólico*. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 1998.

²³ The theme reoccurs, no search seeming to be necessary. For only an example (besides the mentioned book by Castoriadis), check BACZKO, Bronislaw. *Imaginação social*. In: ROMANO, Ruggiero (Dir.). *Enciclopédia Einaudi*, v. 5, Anthropos – Homem. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional/Casa da Moeda, p.296-332, 1985.

²⁴ Analyzing mythological processes of hero-making in contemporary French history, Raoul Girardet called attention to the fact that certain imagined heroes (such as Oedipus, Faust, and Don Juan) can be unceasingly reinvented, but that “such cannot be the case with a man of flesh and blood, historically definable, and whose process of hero-making could not make one forget the particular features which are those of a personality and a destiny”. GIRARDET, Raoul. *Mitos e mitologias políticas*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1987, p.81.

²⁵ An interesting problematization of the concept of ideology, already in the 1970s, can be obtained in GEERTZ, Clifford. A ideologia como sistema cultural. In: *A interpretação das culturas*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 1978.

²⁶ BENJAMIN, Walter. *Obras escolhidas: magia e técnica, arte e política*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1994 (see especially the texts “Sobre o conceito da História”, p.222-232, and “O narrador: considerações sobre a obra de Nicolai Leskov”, p.197-221). On the importance of the concept of “experience” (*Erfahrung*) to Benjamin, see Jeanne Marie Gagnebin’s preface to this edition.

²⁷ On the temporality of epic poetry as an “escape from the time of men”, in which the myth points to eternity and the immutability of the time of heroes and gods, see, among others, FINLEY, Moses. Mito, memória e história. In: _____. *Uso e abuso da história*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1989, p.3-27. It is worth underlining that it was the perception of the larger distance between these two dimensions of time in modernity, past and future (or “space of experience” and “horizon of expectation”), which founded Reinhart Koselleck’s thesis about the constitution of the modern concept of history, in which Saint Augustine’s inquiries about the time of the soul furnished elements to reflect upon the collective sphere of historical time. Similarly, the smaller distance between experience and expectation in the way of dealing with time of the ancient people led François Hartog to formulate his notion of “regimes of historicity”, as opposed to the futurism of modern times and the supposedly presentism of our contemporary time. See KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *Futuro passado*. Contribuição à semântica dos tempos históricos. Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto, 2006. HARTOG, François. *Régimes d’historicité*. Présentisme et expériences du temps. Paris: Seuil, 2003.

²⁸ The notion of “empty and homogeneous time” mentioned before, which points to the teleological perception of history as a progressive march, where the present appears detached from both the past and the future, is present in Walter Benjamin’s own works (see the chapter “Sobre o conceito da História” in the already mentioned book, especially p.229 onwards).

²⁹ The notion was created by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and, according to Catroga himself, Robert Bellah was a pioneer in defining an American civil religion. CATROGA, Fernando. *Entre Deuses e Césarés*. Secularização, laicidade e religião civil. Coimbra: Almedina, 2006, p.163-164.

³⁰ OZOUF, Mona. A festa sob a Revolução Francesa. In: LE GOFF, Jacques; NORA, Pierre (Org.). *História: novos objetos*. Rio de Janeiro: Francisco Alves, 1976, p.217-231. By the same author, see also *La fête révolutionnaire, 1789-1799*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976.

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